

Interest in fungi-based food can increase with a nudge in the right direction, research finds

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Filamentous fungi. Credit: University of Borås

What makes people interested in fungi-based food as an alternative to other protein sources such as meat? A new doctoral thesis explains how it is possible to create sustainable systems for food production. Increased understanding of how people choose and a nudge can make a difference.

Coralie Hellwig, who recently completed her Ph.D. in Resource Recovery at the University of Borås in Sweden, has investigated engagement with fungi-based food among people in Sweden and Europe. She has investigated how they think of, perceive, and experience fungi-based food, and concluded that there are various aspects that affect engagement with this kind of food. Encouraging people to reflect over the consequences that they think their engagement with this kind of food can have, may help people to find motives and a sense of meaning in engaging with it.

In her project, she proposes different ways to encourage engagement and that through this you can contribute to more sustainable systems for food production.

"My project shows that there is optimism and that people who took part in my research think that using edible fungi can contribute to achieving more sustainable systems for food production, and that it also can contribute to reduced emissions," she said.

She has explored individuals' perceptions and investigated what motives there are to choose fungi-based products, but also how they experience this food in terms of factors such as taste and texture.

Hellwig found a wide range of factors that affect engagement with fungi-

based food. Examples of factors are interest in achieving sustainability goals, seeing environmental benefits, circular use of resources, personal interest, [financial benefits](#), sensory characteristics, such as taste and texture, and [health benefits](#).

"It is important to pay attention to the aspects when aiming to encourage engagement with this kind of food, so that it can contribute to more sustainable food systems" she said.

Captured experiences

She also came to the conclusion that more effort and support is needed to increase knowledge about this type of nutritious food.

"My project can contribute to increased understanding of engagement with fungi-based food and what kind of aspects are important when encouraging people to choose this type of food. It can further promote sustainable and efficient use of natural resources and contribute to global well-being," she explained.

Hellwig's research is based on the experiences, thoughts and perceptions that people who participated in her studies shared with her.

Anyone can cultivate the fungi. What is the next step for research around this?

"I would like to investigate how resource recovery can contribute to sustainable food production systems in a broader perspective and look in more detail at engagement with fungi-based food and the implications that this can have. It would also be interesting to explore the cultivation of edible filamentous fungi on safe and edible leftovers, such as stale bread, at households. My research has shown that cultivating such fungi

is something that people can do themselves. But there is a complex picture that needs to be understood when it comes to engagement in new activities that people may have never done before," she said.

The global goals for sustainable development

The doctoral project was linked to the UN's global goals for [sustainable development](#), including no hunger; good health and well-being; sustainable consumption and production; fight climate change; ecosystems and biodiversity. The Paris climate agreement and the EU's sustainable food strategy, Farm to Fork, require an expansion of the supply of nutritious foods that make up a [healthy diet](#) and a shift in engagement with food.

"This shows how important it is to encourage engagement with environmentally, socially and economically sustainable food, such as fungi-based [food](#)," concluded Hellwig.

More information: Engagement with Fungi-Based Food: Recovery and Valorization of Resources for Food. hb.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1748424&dswid=1793

Provided by University of Borås

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